

SPiRiT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS - COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Who Backed Napoleon Out of Mexico?

From the N. Y. Herald. Who backed Napoleon out of Mexico? We have had a brochure from the Chevalier James Watson Webb, our Minister at Brazil, in which he claims that he is the great man; that he arranged between the Emperor Napoleon and the President of the United States the French evacuation, and that the Secretary of State (Mr. Seward) had nothing whatever to do with it. Knowing very well, however, that the world and the rest of mankind, "with all the world and the rest of mankind," as honest Zack Taylor would express it, that the Chevalier Webb has been a diplomatic highflyer and a peacock with a very long tail of the most brilliant plumage, we could not accept this claim on his part that to him exclusively belongs all the honor and power and glory of backing Napoleon out of Mexico. Having, too, a vague recollection that the volunteer voyage of the Chevalier Wikoff across the Atlantic in the fall of 1865 was in some way connected with this Mexican question, we called upon him for the facts connected with that mission to Napoleon, and now, as rebutting testimony against the Chevalier Webb, we have those facts. Gracefully responding to our request, the letter from the Chevalier Wikoff, like a well-directed shot from a heavy columbiad, not only strikes the Chevalier Webb between wind and water, but strikes his timbers and sinks him. To change the figure, the Jack-in-the-box Webb having jumped up full length on this Mexican question, the Chevalier Wikoff has modestly stepped forward and shut him down again, and fastened the lid over him—and there he is. It is neatly done.

The letter of Wikoff, in every sense an admirable letter, is in one view a very valuable one, and that is as a contribution to the inside history of Napoleon's abandonment of his grand Mexican idea. The conferences in the summer of 1865 between Wikoff and M. Montolieu, the French Minister at Washington, and the conversations of Wikoff and President Johnson and General Grant, for the information of Montolieu—the Secretary of State at that time lying still prostrate from the wounds of the assassin Payne—and the whole chain of circumstances which resulted in Wikoff's volunteer mission to Napoleon, though only briefly sketched by the writer, are exceedingly interesting as parts of the hitherto unpublished inside history of the Mexican settlement with Napoleon. We now know distinctly the impression made upon the Government and the French Minister at Washington, by the public opinion through the public press of this country, with the collapse of the Southern Rebellion. We see that the views of General Grant and General Sheridan at that time concerning the French occupation of Mexico alarmed the French Minister, and that in detailing Wikoff to impress all these facts upon the mind of Napoleon the French Minister acted wisely. We say wisely, because in September, 1865, Napoleon, at Biarritz, was absorbed in European affairs, and especially in the grand designs entered into with the great Bismarck. Hence the fears of Montolieu that his despatches on the Mexican danger had escaped, and might escape, that serious attention from the Emperor which the crisis demanded, and hence the wisdom of a special messenger from Washington to the Emperor on this Mexican difficulty.

What was the result? On the 18th of October, 1865, by special appointment the day before at the Tuileries, Napoleon gave an audience at St. Cloud to Wikoff, and a free conversation followed, embracing the political situation at Washington, the dangers of the French-Mexican entanglement, and the Emperor's views and purposes concerning it. The first visit of the Chevalier Webb to Napoleon on the subject was on the 10th of November, some three weeks behind Wikoff; so that, as Wikoff tersely puts it, "When Mr. Webb called on the Emperor he had not only decided to abandon Mexico, but had settled upon the plan of evacuation." This settles Webb. His claim rests on another man's pre-emption—his Mexican patent is an infringement on another man's patent right. In this case he is not the peacock flourishing his own glorious plumage in the sun, but the jack-daw arising himself in a corner of no consequence, but we consider his letter of great consequence in settling Webb, and from the light which it throws on the direct influences behind the scenes operating on Napoleon in behalf of a timely retreat from Mexico.

American Feeling on the Alabama Claims.

From the N. Y. Times. That Mr. Johnson has not correctly interpreted to the people of England the feeling which we of America bear them is very clear; but we hold it to be no less clear that the extreme reactionary tirade indulged in certain quarters is quite as grave a misrepresentation of American feeling. It is clearly a mistake in him to figure us as glowing with the fires of fraternal affection towards Great Britain; but it is just as great a mistake to represent us as burning with resentment and hate.

We protest that the wild talk lately indulged in procuring "the humiliation of England," and of taking nothing less in the settlement of the Alabama claims, is utterly without authority, governmental or popular. It is the mere raving of journals accustomed to go to frenzied extremes on all subjects, and accordingly on this. There is certainly no official authority for such a position. To propose terms of settlement for damages which by their nature cannot be reduced to definite form, and to make those terms of settlement the "humiliation" of one's adversary, "means war"—as Mr. Thornton is reported to have said. President Grant's watchword has always been, "Let us have peace," and in his inaugural Address he declared, "I will respect the rights of all nations, demanding equal respect for our own." That he is dissatisfied with the first draft of the Alabama Convention is very true; but that he proposes "the humiliation of Great Britain" as a substitute for that convention is an inference as unwarranted as it is preposterous.

Nor is there any popular foundation in this demand for "humiliation." The true feeling of the American people regarding the Clarendon-Johnson protocol has been one of thorough disappointment. But it has certainly been no feeling of anger, nor even of indignation, nor hardly of chagrin. The feeling is simply that the convention does not represent the well-understood popular feeling in Great Britain, as well as America, regarding the proper terms of settlement, and hence must be rejected. Our own conviction at the outset was that, with this popular feeling in both countries so clear, the obvious looseness and vagueness in the formal convention could be modified after thorough discussion in the Senate, and in any case would not probably impede the expected payment of damages.

From the uniform tone of the Parliament, the press, and the public of Great Britain, we

had been led to expect, we still are led to expect, that the British Government is ready to pay every dollar of damages done by the Anglo-Confederate cruisers that escaped from its jurisdiction. If this be not so, we had better recommence our course at once, and, as Mr. Johnson says, it is for England's interest to settle those claims rather than to leave them outstanding. On the other hand, if this be so, why do we see nothing of it in the actual protocol?

That convention starts with the assumption that nothing is settled. It supposes it to be a matter of uncertainty whether the Alabama claims ought to be paid at all. It provides that these claims when presented shall be acted on, not as a class, but individually, and individually referred to arbitration in case of dispute as to their validity. It is not even provided that the arbitrator shall always be the same; whereby it might obviously happen that one claim would be allowed and another disallowed, simply because one arbitrator introduced the consideration into his mind of "British recognition of Rebel belligerency," and another did not. In short—not to multiply examples of this sort—it is clear that the convention did not express the substantial public understanding which we of America presume that the two countries have come to.

As we have already said, a substantial understanding may and generally does guide the decision of a convention. But a majority of the people of the United States appear to be dissatisfied that this understanding was not made the fixed basis of agreement, in black and white. If this be the understanding, and the promissory words of the London Times and other organs of popular opinion be only chaff, Great Britain has herself to thank for her conduct, and for the disaster that has befallen the negotiations. On the other hand, the pretense of shallow, sensational writers, that the United States are bent on "the humiliation of England," is entirely without foundation. We are determined to "respect the rights of all nations, demanding equal respect for our own." We suppose it to be useless to proceed further in the negotiations until the British Government makes a formal concession of the validity of the so-called Alabama claims. If that concession be "humiliation," there is some meaning in this latter cry; but that can hardly be "humiliation" in a Government which appears to be voluntarily yielded by its people.

General Grant and the Fifteenth Amendment.

From the N. Y. World. The unequivocal indorsement by General Grant of the proposed fifteenth amendment, in his inaugural address, removed all doubts (if anybody was simple enough to entertain doubts) of his purpose to identify himself fully with the Republican party, and to give no offense to the radicals, the most extreme portion of it. Just before the inauguration we took occasion to state that we were under no illusion on this subject. We showed that the force of circumstances would make the administration decidedly Republican. It was our wish to forestall and discourage any attempts, by hopeful and over-civil Democrats in Congress, to curry favor with the new President, in the hope of exerting a backstairs influence on his administration, or of moderating his policy. Such efforts can have no other effect than to demoralize the Democratic party, and abate the spirit and vigor of that opposition which will be the duty of Democrats to confront the new administration from its first hour. In the last Democratic hope of General Grant and the Republican distrust of him are equally shallow and ridiculous; and this was as clear to us before he had broken his sphinx-like silence as it was after he had openly endorsed universal negro suffrage and had selected such radicals as Washburne, Boutwell, and Hoar for places in his Cabinet. The recent bickerings and grumbings, to which both parties attach undue importance, merely ruffle the surface of politics, as the wind does the sea; but when the tide is coming in, we estimate the future level of the water by the laws which heave up its flood rather than by the fitful agitations of its surface. Our knowledge of General Grant's further aspirations, and of the only means by which he can hope to realize them, enables us to tell, without any gift of prophecy or much penetration, what relation he will hold to the two great political parties. It is the sheerest folly for either Democrats or Republicans to imagine that he will tread in the footsteps of President Johnson.

General Grant wishes to be re-elected; and, like all Presidents who have cherished this wish, he will make his first term subservient to his hopes of a second. To be elected again he must be nominated; and the time is past when he can expect a Democratic nomination. His first nomination was, no doubt, forced on the Republicans by their fears that if they did not run him the Democrats would; but that is a fear which they can never entertain a second time. A political party may run an uncommitted man; but no opposition party was ever known to take up a President in office elected by its opponents, and make him its candidate for re-election. The chief aim of General Grant, for the ensuing three years, will be to secure the Republican nomination in 1872; and it is necessary to his success that he should act, in the main, with the Republican party. President Johnson's breach with that party was no advantage to Democrats, and we have no desire to see the experiment repeated. It so stirred up the spirit of rancor that the Republicans were able to preserve the unity and vigor of their party, and to carry extreme measures which they could not have consummated, and would not have even dared to propose, if that stubborn quarrel had not been to them a source of animation and energy. We have no wish to see new life again infused into the decaying Republican party by such means.

The most far-sighted of the Republican leaders understand General Grant perfectly, and they do not yet incline to favor his aspirations for a re-election. They nominated him once out of fear that he would be run by the Democrats; but they know well enough that he cannot be again forced upon them in that way, and they are not willing to give him the advantage of another method. This explains why they are willing to suspend the Tenure-of-Office act for a little while at the beginning of his administration, to enable him to turn out Mr. Johnson's appointees; but mean to keep his hands from meddling with the residue of his term, to prevent his using the power of removal as a means of compelling all the office-holders of the country to work seasonally for his re-nomination. If the office-holders are made independent of him for the last year or two of his term, they will have no stronger motives to promote his nomination than that of any other member of the party. The singular way in which the Republicans are playing fast and loose with the Tenure-of-Office act, is a part of the political game for nominating General Grant's successor. Having nominated him once because they could not help it, they do not wish to have the same necessity forced upon them again by his unlimited control over the Federal patronage.

General Grant's indorsement of the fifteenth amendment is a card well played towards securing a re-nomination. It places him on the most advanced ground which the

radicals have yet occupied; and as it is certain that the amendment will not be immediately ratified by three-fourths of the States, the question will be kept open long enough for him to make a display of seal by using the influence of his administration to secure the lacking ratifications. As a majority of the party are radicals, and as his rivals for the succession will probably be radicals, he has made a dexterous enough move in coolly mounting this radical hobby. General Grant desires not only to be re-elected; and he calculates, with apparent good reason, that the negro vote will be given to the Republican party. In a very close contest, the negro vote would be sufficient to turn the scale in several of the Northern States. It might enable the Republicans to carry the October elections in 1872, and thus virtually decide the Presidential election. General Grant cares little for the political rights of the negroes; but he is quite willing to be re-elected by the aid of their votes, which he will need badly enough if he gets another Republican nomination.

There is nothing which the Democratic party can do which will conduce more to its success in 1872 than the defeat of this fifteenth amendment. A strenuous effort will easily secure its rejection by States enough to lay it decently in its coffin. As an engagement to exertion, we quote the following estimate of its chances from a letter by "Occasional" (Forney) to the Philadelphia Press:

"The fifteenth amendment, from present indications will be a part of the nation's Constitution within two years, and even within a year if Georgia should confirm it, and Virginia and Mississippi be reconquered in time for admission at the December session. There are thirty-seven States. Twenty-seven and three-quarters are three-fourths of the whole. Of these the following are controlled by the Republicans:—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—25.

The last Connecticut Legislature was Republican, and it is supposed another also. The present Democratic Legislature of Ohio is an accident that will certainly be cured at another election. The three votes necessary to complete the work are to be got from Connecticut, Ohio, Virginia, Mississippi, Georgia, and Texas."

We call upon Democrats in these last-named States to do "their level best" (we trust they do not need our exhortations), and prevent this hideous debasement of the suffrage for the benefit of the Republican party.

The Moral of St. Patrick's Day.

From the N. Y. Tribune. Looked at through an artist's eye, it would not be easy to find a sight less exhilarating than the annual procession in honor of the good Saint Patrick. The highest notion of decoration that our Irish fellow-citizens have attained to, thus far, would seem to be a green velvet shoulder-belt with gold fringe over a black broadcloth coat—both coat and shoulder-belt considerably the worse for wear; and they are apparently of the opinion that a procession three miles long and over has a right to block up the principal thoroughfares of a great city at the busiest time of day, without giving the public any better compensation than the sight of ten thousand men in suits of black cloth and stove-pipe hats, with only a banner now and then, and an occasional band of indifferently music by way of incident. An American procession is always interesting, because the abounding ingenuity of our people furnishes decorations and incidents in plenty. People are contented to give up their business for three or four hours, to sit all day on steps and in balconies, for the sake of seeing such a procession as that in honor of the introduction of the Croton water, or the completion of the Erie Canal, or for the successful laying of the Atlantic cable, or for the first Japanese embassy. These were all splendid sights, and worthy of a great city. But we certainly cannot say that the St. Patrick's processions have ever been worth going to the window to see, merely as sights. We see no reason why they should not be better than they are in this respect. Ireland has a history of her own, and traditions, and great names; and why these should be forgotten, or her Saint's day, in various emblematic ways, it is not easy to see. Then, too, the societies might adopt some picturesque uniform, or costume of a sort that should be striking, or rich, or gay, and so this doleful monotony of black, long-tailed coats and stove-pipe hats be broken up. How this is to be contrived, it is not for us to say, but, if our Irish fellow-citizens wish their great holiday to be looked forward to by the people of New York with pleasure, instead of with, to say the very least, indifference, they will take some pains to follow out our suggestion on another year. Let every ticket of invitation to join the procession bear upon its face, "Now hats requested, and new velvet shoulder-belts."

But, putting the artistic question wholly to one side for the present, we confess to taking a great pleasure in St. Patrick's Day, and a kindly feeling towards the ugly procession itself. We like to see human beings happy at any time, but in the Irishman's happiness in this country there is something that is touching to generous sensibilities, as well as merely pleasant to see. We enjoy seeing the marble walls stop for a day their climbing to the sky, and the deep foundations stop arrowing to the centre, when we think that all the busy workers on them are wiping off their hands and faces the dust and grime of toil, and preparing to make a gaudy day of it. We don't mind eating our dinner for once at a restaurant, or toasting the bread while our wife makes the tea with her own hands (seeing that, in our house, so long as we know what good tea is, no other hands but hers shall ever make it!) because Mary, and Mary Ann, and Mary Jane have asked leave "to go and see the procession," or have gone without leave. Indeed, our sympathies are so cordially with those excellent maids—cook, chambermaid, and waiter—that we always save our own dignity and their feelings by giving them the day before they can ask for it. And we wish everybody that can would follow our disinterested example, and add what could be added in this way to the cheerfulness of the occasion. Yet, "tis cheerful enough without any addition at our hands! Cheerful to see the black-haired, rosy-cheeked Irish girls come panting and puffing up Court-street, or Fulton street, or what you will, "Come along, wid yer, do! hurry along, 'tis the great central! At the great central! Biddy, low, don't be stharia! all day at them swate Meesena oraches! Saints take yer! what if they be sixteen for a quarter, and yer miss the procession with stowing 'em in yer pocket." And, "Oh, hurry, darlint, never mind the origin—and how beautiful he does do it to be shure; wid the one hand of 'im—but of he was my own sister's son that was kill in the war I couldn't stand for him now and miss the procession!" And here a black-eyed beauty, with a low brow and black hair, like Fanny Kemble's own, who comes shooting out of a Broome street car, like a rose out of its sheath, with a "Oh, Nora, oh! and we've missed ten thousand of the byes, and wheriver is Jim? It's by the black hat and

coat I'm to know him, and Ted Brady is the bye that I'll see with the beautiful green ribbon around the neck; and we are glad to say they have them in plenty like the rest of us, for without vices we couldn't have virtues, and shouldn't be human. We give 'em a cordial hand of welcome, and are proud of this hard-fisted, hard-worked band of exiles. We won't even blame them too much for being Democrats to a man, for as they understand the word it would be strange if they were not, and no credit to them either! When they find out, as they will in time, that the Democracy they swear by here is the same in principle with the aristocracy that made their life at home a curse, and drove them out of their native land to escape starvation, they will come over to the true Democracy that, with Grant as leader, has saved the republic the sham Democracy under Lee and Seymour tried to destroy, and they will come to stay.

For ourselves, we do most sincerely believe that, in time, the emigration to this country of Irish in numbers sufficient to influence, as they have done, our manners, our customs, and our politics, will prove of great national service. Their exile from Ireland has already begun to repay the cruel masters of that beautiful island with sterility for her ancient fruitfulness, with famine for her ancient abundance, and with emity where, if there never was, at least there might have been, the warmest friendship. At present we in America see the Irish race suffering under all the faults and drawbacks that have resulted from the blighting rule of English injustice, bigotry, and greed. But the day will surely come when, under the benign influence of institutions really free, with ample means of education, and the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness secured to them not merely by the technical law but by the spirit of the country as well, they will ripen into a generous growth and show all the virtue that is in them, and renew under other but not alien skies the glories of their earlier day.

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